TWO FAIR FRIENDS.

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD,

Author of "Robert Aske," "Avice," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

"HIS EWE LAMB."

FOR the next fortnight the quiet monotony of life at the Vicarage underwent a change. There were comings and goings, excursions to all the different places of interest in the neighbourhood; and for the first time in her little life Miriam had another companion besides her father. Gilbert Moran was not actually a handsome boy, but he had a wonderfully intelligent face, and was tall for his age. He was, moreover, a great athlete both in the cricket-field and on the river. And yet he by no means despised Miriam, though she was a very little girl, but took her off with him when he went fishing, and told her stories as she lay in the long grass beside him, looking idly into the water. More than once she fell asleep, and he carried her home, greatly to her discomfiture when she awoke and found herself lying on the library sofa.

One afternoon they had been absent longer than usual, having started off immediately after lunch—Miriam on her pony and Gilbert walking beside her—to visit the old druidical ruins of Stonehenge. It was a hot June day. Mr. Irving had parish work on hand, and Mr. Moran declared he preferred the shade of the Vicarage garden to the glaring sunshine of Salisbury Plain; so the two started off alone in high spirits, and instead of returning by tea time, at seven o'clock were still absent. Mr. Irving was in a perfect fever of anxiety.

"I cannot think how I came to let her go," he said; "she never leaves me."

"But that cannot continue," observed Mr. Moran.

"Oh, yes, it will," he answered, sharply. "I do not intend any one to come between me and my daughter. I am thankful she is a girl; there will be no necessity for me ever to part from her."

"Until she marries," said Mr. Moran.

"Marries! why should she?" queried Mr. Irving, irritably. "I hope to bring her up not to think marriage the object and end of life. I shall educate her in such a way that her mind will have something else to dwell upon. Besides, why should not my love suffice her? Surely it will be deeper and stronger than any other."

Mr. Moran shook his head. "I am afraid you are preparing bitter disappointment for yourself," he said. "Of course, it may turn out as you wish; at the same time, you must remember that love and marriage are natural laws, and you would be wrong from any personal motive of your own to deprive Miriam of the joys of wifehood and motherhood."

"I shall nevertheless do my best to keep her with me," said Cecil Irving. "I am still a young man, and for many years yet shall be able to enter into her enjoyments, and she will grow up to me. You will see my plan will prove successful."

"For both your sakes I trust so," returned Mr. Moran.

"It was you who persuaded me to keep her with me," continued Cecil, "and now she is as the very apple of my eye. I do not know what my life would be without her. Ah, thank God, there they are," he exclaimed, as he saw Gilbert and the pony with Miriam coming quickly down the road.

He opened the garden gate, and went out to meet them.

"Why have you kept Miriam out so late, Gilbert? I have been very anxious. I never allow her to be away from home so long," he said, sternly.

"It was my fault," answered Miriam. "We have had such a good time. Look at my wild flowers, father!" and she held up to him a bunch of gorgeous field blossoms. "We were a long time on the way, for it was so hot, and

"Look at my wild flowers, father!"

Gilbert made me rest in the shade. Indeed, he has taken great care of me—as much care almost as you do, father dear, and I am not at all tired."

Without speaking, Mr. Irving lifted her off her pony; but his brow was clouded. "Could any one take such care of her as he did?"

Mr. Moran overheard the speech, and noticed the look of annoyance, but it passed off as soon as Miriam, having had her tea, settled herself on his knee and began telling the little incidents of the day.

One thing especially excited her. Gilbert had told her he was going to be a missionary, and had explained to her what that meant, and now she was going to give him all her mission box could produce, which was not much at present, but in future she should exert herself and get more.

"Is this really true, Moran—are you going to let Gilbert leave you for mission work?"

"If he really wishes it, yes," said Mr. Moran; "but he is young yet, has his university career before him, and may change his mind more than once."

"I do not think I shall," said Gilbert, firmly; "but you know, father, that without your consent I will never leave England."

"When I am persuaded that indeed the Lord has called you, I shall not withhold you from His service, hard as the parting will be," answered Mr. Moran; "but we are agreed never to speak on this subject until it is absolutely necessary to come to a decision," and catching up a ball Miriam had left on the garden path, he threw it at her.

This was the signal for a regular game of play in which they all joined, and the child's merry laughter rang on the soft summer air, and made the passing villagers remark with an indulgent smile of sympathy, "Miss Miriam is making merry this evening."

And certainly a happier little girl never laid down to rest than Miriam Irving that evening. As her father stooped over her white curtained bed, and tenderly kissed the uplifted face, one idea possessed him—no one should steal her from him if he could guard her, his ewe lamb!

He would have been horrified indeed if he could for one moment have guessed at the plot which that very innocent-looking Mr. Moran, as he stood in the porch absorbed in thought, was hatching against him, and as he deemed for Miriam's good.

Miss Bessie Nunn was a great favourite with Mr. Moran, and everybody knew it; he himself had a shrewd suspicion of the real state of Miss Bessie's heart and was sorry for her, for he felt convinced that Cecil Irving would never marry. Mr. Moran was one of those intensely sympathetic persons who understand men and women thoroughly, and he was able to enter into the narrow, uneventful life of this middle-aged woman, who had known so few joys. He divined the impatience which the monotony, the weariness of her daily life must at one time have engendered in the young girl, until it gradually subsided into quiet resignation as years went on and no change came to her. It was only natural that a man like Cecil Irving, living within a stone's throw of her home, and whom she saw every day, should arouse feelings of a warmer nature than might be altogether desirable for her peace of mind; and, moreover, the Vicar was a very charming man when he chose to exert himself, and his perfect indifference to womankind made that charm all the greater. Mr. Moran was extremely anxious about his god-daughter Miriam; he did not in the least believe in her father's theories, he felt that a woman's influence was absolutely necessary to her well-being, mentally and physically; and Miss Bessie being the only woman within reach, he determined to enlist her on his side. So, the morning before he left, when he knew he should find her alone, he went to the Doctor's house, and asking to see Miss Bessie, was shown at once into the best parlour.

There was a little nervous flutter in her manner when she came in to him, which he hastened to put to rest, by saying abruptly, "I have come to you about Miriam, Miss Bessie; it is of no use speaking to the Vicar, you must come to the rescue."

"*Me?* How can I?" she exclaimed.

"By attracting her here, by keeping her with you as much as possible, by teaching her your woman's ways. Her father will over-teach and utterly spoil her, with his notion of making her his lifelong companion. I love the child, not only for her own, but for her mother's sake, Miss Bessie; will you not help me?"

"I love Miriam also," answered Miss Bessie; "but if I attract her here, you know what will be said," and she coloured.

"I have thought of that," replied Mr. Moran; "but the welfare of a little child is in question. She is so utterly alone—will you sacrifice her for fear of idle gossip, which must in due time die for lack of food? If I have not misjudged you, you are too good, too brave a woman to do this." He ceased speaking, and looked steadily at her.

We should be less chary of praise if we realised oftener how imputed virtue frequently creates the real article. Bessie felt a glow of enthusiasm at the very fact of a sacrifice being demanded of her.

"Yes," she said, "I am quite equal to it. After all, I am no longer a young woman—I was five-and-thirty last birthday; I can afford to let people talk. Miriam can come to me as much as Mr. Irving likes; I will teach her all I know," and she looked young and almost handsome, with the light of an honest woman's soul shining in her eyes, as she uttered these words.

"I thank you sincerely," said Mr. Moran, rising. "If I were less selfish for Miriam's sake, I could find it in my heart to wish you a husband and children of your own."

"Not very likely," said Bessie; "but I shall be very happy with Miriam for my child, and the parish work."

And, truly, as she accompanied Mr. Moran to the door, she felt happier than she had done for a long time past—a weight seemed lifted from her heart. She had awakened from an idle dream to the reality of life and its work.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIEND.

"MIRIAM, what are you doing?" said the Vicar, roused from his writing by the irritating sound of pieces of money clinking against each other.

"I'm trying to count my mission money, father. I'd no time whilst Gilbert was here, and I promised to send it to him."

"Well, what conclusion have you come to?" asked her father.

"I can't quite make out," she answered; and, gathering her pinafore together, she got up from the floor, and coming over to her father, emptied the contents on the table before him. "Now tell me how much I've got," she said.

"Seven shillings and sixpence," said the Vicar. "You've not done much, Miriam, considering your godfather put five shillings in when he gave you the box."

"Well, you see, I didn't understand," answered the

child, airily; "but now I think I shall put my box in the hall—it is not properly seen in your study—and then I can point it out to everybody who comes, and tell them it is especially for Gilbert's mission."

"A nice nuisance you'll be," said her father, leaning back in his chair, and laughing; "and considering that Gilbert has not decided upon his vocation, and that it will be at least six years before he can enter upon it, I must say I think you are premature."

"Oh, never mind," returned Miriam, "he'll be all the richer, or his heathen will."

Again the Vicar laughed, evidently her ideas on the subject were very vague; but it made her happy, and as that was all he ever thought of as far as she was concerned, he humoured her, and the next day went with her to the post-office, and sent Gilbert an order for the money.

"It's all very well for Gilbert to leave his father, and be a missionary," she said, as holding his hand they came home together, "but you would not like me to leave you, should you, father?"

"I hope you will never think such a thing possible," said Mr. Irving. "Why, Miriam, you are all in all to me; I have no one else to love in the world," and he pressed her hand so tightly that the child almost winced.

"You need not be afraid, father," she replied; "I shall never leave you."

"Promise," said her father.

"Of course I promise," answered Miriam; and the Vicar, satisfied, let the subject drop.

From this time, however, an entire change took place, not only in Miriam's character, but in her daily life. Her father had so far stooped to her, but now by every device in his power he sought to draw her up to him, to develop her intelligence. She had a strong character, and a determined will—what she undertook to do she did with all her might. He gave her, as Mr. Moran had felt certain he would, the education of a boy, teaching her Latin, mathematics, and classics; his love alone, with her own natural facility for acquiring knowledge, made such an education possible, added to Miss Bessie's influence, which softened the rough edges.

The Vicar outside his home was a reserved man, and therefore less popular than he might otherwise have been; but Bessie Nunn knew every man and woman in the parish, their needs, and all that concerned them, and by degrees she aroused Miriam's interest, taking her with her on her rounds wherever she thought it right she should go, and getting her, in the long winter afternoons when the Vicar was often obliged to be absent, to work with her for their poorer neighbours. Mr. Irving would have resented any such interference from a strong-minded, officious woman, but Bessie was so unpretentious, so devoted to himself, doing such good work in his parish, that he was thankful Miriam should be with her, feeling sure there would be no counter influence from that quarter. Few homes were as free from care as was the Vicarage of Porton. The union between father and daughter was so complete. As she grew older, the Vicar talked to her as if her mind had been on a level with his own. Literature, theology, politics, it was all the same. She read aloud to him books far beyond her years, she wrote at his dictation. Her father rarely went anywhere without her; in his journeyings, and they were few and far between, she always accompanied him. The few visitors who came to the Vicarage, mostly fellow-clergymen, were astonished at this girl, who, whilst still young in years, was her father's companion, managed his house, and knew almost everything about the parish.

When told of her doings, the wives shook their heads, declaring she ought to be in the schoolroom, and prophesying all sorts of dreadful results from such an education. As she grew into girlhood she was not good-looking, very tall and thin, strikingly like her father. Her only beauty lay in her eyes, and long, dark hair, falling below her waist. "She'll be a very handsome woman," Mr. Moran declared, when he and Gilbert paid their yearly visit.

Companions of her own age she had none, and so far she had never felt the need; nevertheless, she experienced a mingled feeling of excitement and pleasure, when, running over to the Doctor's one morning, she found both Miss Bessie and her sister in tears.

"What has happened, dear?" she exclaimed, throwing her arms round her friend's neck.

For all answer, Miss Bessie held up a letter with a deep black border.

"From your brother in Australia?" asked Miriam.

"From his wife," she answered. "He, poor fellow, is dead, leaving her and three children almost unprovided for. She writes that at his especial dying request she is sending the eldest girl over to us; she will be here almost as soon as this letter announcing her arrival."

"Isn't that rather cool?" said Miriam. "She might have waited to know if you could have her."

"Our only brother's child might be sure of a welcome," said the elder Miss Nunn. "Father, you must go to Liverpool to meet her; the *Victoria* is due the day after to-morrow."

"Certainly I must, poor child," said the old gentleman. "Miriam, here's a companion for you at last. I hope you will be friends."

"Friends! of course we shall be," she answered, enthusiastically. "How old is she?"

"Just seventeen, a little older than you are, dear," said Miss Bessie.

"And much wiser, I dare say," said Miriam. "Isn't she the niece who plays so beautifully?"

"Her father used to write that she had a great talent, and that he very much wished he could afford to send her over to Europe for her education; he gave her the best masters to be had in Sydney," said Miss Bessie. "Have you never seen her portrait, Miriam? Her mother enclosed this one in her last letter," and she handed her a photograph.

"Oh, how pretty!" said Miriam. "We must love her."

And certainly it was an unusually pretty picture, of a young girl standing with a sheet of music in her hand, her head slightly thrown back, a smile on her lips as if she were just about to break forth into song; she was evidently small and fair, beautifully proportioned, with delicate features.

"Yes, she must be very pretty," said Miss Bessie, with a certain pride. "I wonder how she will endure our dull life after Sydney, which, I believe, is very gay, poor child!"

"She will have to endure it as others have done before her," answered Miss Nunn, sharply, "and be thankful she has a good home to come to. But it's no use talking; father, you must look out the trains, and we must see to her room, Bessie."

"Which one shall you give her?" asked Miriam. "Do let it be the west room looking on to the Vicarage garden."

"Well, I had thought of letting her have the best bedroom, but it might make her think too much of herself; so as you wish it, Miriam, it shall be the west room."

"It will want freshening up," said Bessie; "the curtains are very dingy."

Before Miss Nunn could object, Miriam exclaimed, "There are some lovely chintzes at Norris's, so cheap. Do let me go down to the shop with you to choose them, Miss Nunn, and then we will make them up this afternoon. Father has a meeting at Salisbury and will not want me, and I should like to help; she is to be my friend, you know. What is her name?"

"Sylvia," said Miss Bessie, smiling at the girl's enthusiasm, with, perhaps, just a little feeling of soreness that a stranger seemed likely to come between her and the child she had loved so long. "And yet Sylvia is my own niece," she thought. "How foolish!"

The next few days were indeed busy ones. How they worked, and sewed, and planned! Miriam had never been so excited in all her life. Nothing was too good for the stranger. She brought ornaments over from her own room to adorn the rather bare west room, she assisted in hanging pictures and curtains, and an old discarded green flower-box was put on the window-sill and filled with plants.

Her father looked on, watching her with surprise.

"Why, Miriam," he said, the morning of the expected arrival, when for the twentieth time she had expressed the hope that the weather would keep fine, "I never knew you were so anxious to have a companion, I thought you were so perfectly happy and contented."

"So I am, father. I have never wanted any one or any thing, but now Sylvia is coming I am glad, I cannot quite say why. Ah, here comes Miss Bessie with a letter in her hand," and she ran out to meet her.

"They cannot get here till to-morrow, Miriam," she said.

"Oh, how vexing!" exclaimed Miriam.

It was something new for her to desire anything ardently, so that even this delay was a great disappointment, and for the first time in her life her father found she was unable to give her full attention to her studies that afternoon. He would have been surprised had he seen her standing at her window when she went to bed, smiling and wondering to herself what it would be like to have a friend. "I shall know to-morrow," she thought.

(*Continued on page* 129.)

FOR MOTHERS AND WIVES.

BY PHYLLIS BROWNE.

School Prizes for Children.

THERE is a good deal of searching of heart at the present time as to whether or not the practice of offering prizes to children who make progress with their studies at school is harmful or helpful. For the most part, experienced mothers have come to the conclusion that they are harmful. They foster selfishness in children, tempt them to rejoice at the shortcomings of their friends, and promote a spirit of rivalry amongst school companions. Also they are objectionable because it is so difficult to award them justly. The quick child is the one who obtains the prize, whereas a child no more deserves to be rewarded because he is quick, than he deserves to be rewarded because he is tall or his nose is straight. In justice the prize ought to be given to the child who has conscientiously worked and plodded under adverse circumstances. Yet it is a very rare thing for such a child to obtain a prize.

It is, however, useless for mothers to disapprove of prizes. They are amongst the things which are settled for us without our having a voice in the matter, like the east winds. All we can do is to encourage the children to think lightly of them, and to care more for the approval of conscience than for a place in the class. As schools are managed at present, one or two children only belonging to a class can carry off prizes; but all may do their best. Children are not sent to school to distinguish themselves, but in order that they may gain knowledge and learn how to use it.

Sydney Smith's words on this particular point are worth learning by heart:—"The real object of education is to give children resources that will endure as long as life endures; habits that time will ameliorate, not destroy; occupation that will render sickness tolerable, solitude pleasant, age venerable, life more dignified and useful, and death less terrible."

"Stir Yourself at Ease."

Thomas Carlyle, the great philosopher, had a deep love for his mother. When he earned money he delighted in sending her a share of it, and with one of these presents he sent a letter, in which he said, "Get yourself, dear mother, something you wished to get. *Stir yourself more at ease* than you would have done. It will be my greatest luxury."

"Stirring one's self at ease" is very agreeable to those who have been accustomed to be cramped for want of money. Money troubles are prosaic, but a good many people have to endure them. Dora Greenwell once said that "they do away with the pleasant, glossy part of life," and that for her part she regarded "making both ends meet as a miserable idea of perfection; she should like them to tie in a handsome bow." There is a story told of a woman who said to a friend, "My husband is like me; he enjoys economy." Not many people are of the same mind as this interesting pair.

Mothers and wives who cannot enjoy the luxury of stirring themselves at ease are invited to lay to heart these three sayings of great men, which bear somewhat on the situation. They may prove helpful. The two first are by Emerson; the third is by Dr. Johnson:—"No wishing will change the rigorous limits of pints and penny loaves." "Indigent persons should learn either to want less or gain more." "The habit of looking on the bright side of things is worth £1,000 a year."

"Picking Up."

An observer of the ways of women has remarked, with perfect truth, that one of the most "time-consuming cares" of order-loving housewives may be described under the general head of "picking up." It is particularly unfortunate that women who have the faculty of order strongly developed too often encourage the practice of disorder in their families simply because they will "tidy up" after everyone else. They tidy up after their husbands, tidy up

"Azure domed and silver foamed, the ocean lay." *p.* 118.

after their daughters, tidy up after the babies in the nursery. The girls come in from taking a walk ; they throw their hats on one chair, their gloves on a second, and the flowers they have gathered on the table. But they experience no immediate inconvenience from their carelessness, because mother immediately spends ten minutes in tidying the room they have set awry. The ultimate result, nevertheless, is that the mother is ever so much more tired at the end of the day than she need have been, and the children become habitually disorderly and altogether indifferent to the comfort of others.

Perhaps there is no person living after whom a loving wife "tidies up" more willingly than the good man of the house. Yet husbands would make less work in this way if they realised that they are binding unnecessary burdens on the shoulders of their wives. Said a matron recently, "My husband's progress through the house is marked by a litter of hats, coats, slippers, newspapers, pamphlets, books, inkstands, reports, collars, handkerchiefs, etc. He is for ever saying, 'Dear, do you remember where you put such and such a thing of mine? I can't find it anywhere ;' and he wonders why his wife has so inconvenient a habit of picking things up."

If everyone in a house is of one mind about putting everything in the place to which it belongs as soon as done with, the labour attached to picking up would

scarcely be worth mentioning. Mothers, if you wish your children to grow up to be orderly, train them while they are babies to put away their toys and picture-books, and let them wait on themselves; do not wait on them. Girls, if you would save your mother from being unduly fatigued, get into the way of carrying away your own belongings the instant they are done with. People who have the gift of order invariably put away their outdoor garments, their books, their letters, their work, *when they lay them down.* In this matter she who procrastinates is lost. If we consider how much misery one disorderly person can make in a house, we shall not make the mistake of thinking that the subject of picking up is a trifling one.

Knitted Lace Edging.

Mothers and wives in the habit of knitting may be glad to have a pretty pattern for lace edging. It is very simple, and can be easily remembered, so that a practised knitter can soon make it without needing to look at the directions every other stitch. It is also very effective.

Cast on 10 stitches.

1st row—Slip 1, knit 2, thread forward, narrow, thread twice over the needle, narrow, twice over the needle, narrow, knit 1.

2nd row—Knit 3, purl 1, knit 2, purl 1, knit 2, thread forward, narrow, knit 1.

3rd row—Slip 1, knit 2, thread forward, narrow, knit 2, thread over twice, narrow, thread over twice, narrow, knit 1.

4th row—Knit 3, purl 1, knit 2, purl 1, knit 4, thread forward, narrow, knit 1.

5th row—Slip 1, knit 2, thread forward, narrow, knit 4, thread over twice, narrow, thread twice over, narrow, knit 1.

6th row—Knit 3, purl 1, knit 2, purl 1, knit 6, thread forward, narrow, knit 1.

7th row—Slip 1, knit 2, thread forward, narrow, knit 6, thread over twice, narrow, thread over twice, narrow, knit 1.

8th row—Knit 3, purl 1, knit 2, purl 1, knit 8, thread forward, narrow, knit 1.

9th row—Slip 1, knit 2, thread forward, narrow, knit to the end.

10th row—Cast off all but 10, knit 6, thread forward, narrow, knit 1.

Begin again at the first row, and proceed to the end.

CALM AND STORM.

A zure domed,
And silver foamed,
And flecked by many a snowy sail,
The ocean lay,
One summer's day,
Scarce rippling in the southern gale;
I felt for me
That life might be
As tranquil as that summer sea.

But as I gazed,
The seabirds raised
A cry of dol'rous, sad forebode.
Athwart fair heaven
Black clouds were driven,
And high the angry billows rode.
Ah, then for me,
Prophetic sea,
Thou told'st in truth what life must be.

Now azure domed,
And silver foamed,
Once more it tells the same sweet tale;
And this shall last
When—life's sands past—
For heaven's bright shore our souls set sail.
Then smile, fair sea,
Less glad, less free,
Than they that to that harbour flee!

Katherine Cooper.

A WISE MOTHER.

"Don't tell mother. She'll go off into a fit if you do. There's not the slightest danger, but she frets over nothing."

The speaker was a boy of about fourteen years of age, and his audience consisted of several companions. As he spoke a lady happened to be passing.

"Frets over nothing!" she repeated, as she went her way. "How many mothers there are of whom that has been said by their children, and with truth!"

It is undeniably true that the mothers who fret unnecessarily are not the ones who have the greatest influence over their children. The reason is, that by allowing themselves to fret over matters of very little consequence, they are apt to lose their power of influence when it is really needed.

There is a wise mother whom we know who is almost continually exercised in her mind on account of her extreme nervousness. One day a lady visitor, making a casual call, found her so restless as to be quite unable to attend to her regular duties about the house.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Is anyone sick?"

"No," replied the mother, half laughing, half crying; "and I suppose I am very foolish. The truth is, my boys have just erected a trapeze at the back of the house, and I am greatly depressed with the fear that one of them may be killed."

"Why don't you compel them to take it down, then?" said the visitor. "I should like to see myself worrying about a trouble that could be so easily removed. You are surprisingly weak and foolish about those boys of yours."

Her voice was so full of scorn that it aroused the mother's spirit, and taking her visitor to the window, she pointed to a group of boys whom she had just caught sight of.

"Isn't that boy in the brown cap yours?" she asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"And who are the other boys?"

"I really don't know; how should I?"

"I do. They are Tom Burgess and Dick Styles, two of the worst lads in the place. It would hurt me," she

continued, "to have my boys seen in their company. I prefer to run the risk of their falling from the trapeze; the danger is no greater."

The visitor turned from the window, with a very red face. "You have taught me a lesson," she said. "Yet, I do not see why, in our endeavour to keep our boys at home, we should allow them to have amusements which are a source of worry to ourselves."

"Very nervous people cannot stand every sort of boyish play," returned the mother, with a significant smile. "I know that I am naturally nervous, and disposed to find danger in everything. I also know that it is perfectly natural for healthy boys to enjoy play in which there is an element of danger, and that they will be sure to engage in it some time, with or without consent. If my boys must perform on a trapeze, I would rather it should be at home, where I can give them immediate attention in case of an accident; and as I have concluded to accept it as one of the lesser evils, I do not intend to spoil their enjoyment by letting them see how nervous it makes me."

"Well, I believe your boys are wonderful stay-at-homes," said the visitor, thoughtfully.

"And I know that I have their confidence," replied the mother. "They call me a 'right good fellow,' and say that I am as good as a boy any day! They would be surprised if they knew how much trepidation I have endured in my efforts to enjoy with them what they call 'jolly good fun!' Good day, my dear."

This simple incident needs no comment. There are surely some mothers who need the useful lesson it teaches.

HOW CHAIRS ARE MADE.

IN the Buckinghamshire beech-woods there is always something to see. The silver trunks of the beeches glitter in the sunshine; the mosses that crowd about their feet glow greenly, and as we stand beside our favourite trees we think mournfully of their destiny in the near future, and wonder how long it will be before they meet their fate and are ignominiously lopped down and made into useful chairs, for which purpose they are grown.

For we are in the very heart of the chair country, and, in consequence, the beeches are only existing on sufferance, as it were, and are doomed. They are born only to die, and presently will be cut down and carted away piecemeal to the neighbouring cottages, where nearly everyone has something to do with chair-making, and where if the men of the family have no lathe and turning-shed of their own, the women sit at their doors and cane the chairs, talking to each other as they do so, and discussing at the top of their voices the news of the village.

Several men, however, possess turning-sheds and lathes. One of these is close by, and is well worth a visit. As we draw near we hear the thud, thud of the work going on within, and we can see the curious home-made lathe going up and down; while a youth is cutting up small logs of wood with a mallet and hatchet. The shed has large logs of wood lying all about; these are to be reduced by the saw to an orthodox size; they are then stacked in a proper fixed stand to season, and are not put into the lathe until there is some chance of their being steadied by age, as it were, and made fit for the hard wear and strain before them. For in this special corner of the world chairs are made in the good old way, and are meant to wear, not fall in pieces the instant they are sat upon, and are mostly made by hand from well-seasoned wood. There is no slack work, no machine turned-out article to be found among the chairs made from the Buckinghamshire beeches. Indeed, the turning-shed is too far from humanity's reach, too rural, too quaint to be, as it were, the abode of deception in any way; it is buried in cherry-trees, round which the bees are humming merrily, it seems to us, at nearly all times of the year. It is a very modest place; thatched in bark, and with a curious sort of padded interior, filled in and wadded with dead leaves to keep out the cold in winter and the heat in summer. And here the master works at his lathe, while his son cuts up the logs and barks them, and finally stacks them away under another bark-thatched shed until such time as they will be fit for use, when they will be turned into chair rungs or chair backs and legs, and sent down to the factory in the town, where they are put together, and from whence they emerge as chairs, which are sent up to London in their thousands, travelling along in big carts by road, thus keeping up their old-world character until the very last.

It is about three miles from the turning-shed to the factory; down a long hill that leads through lovely country into the very heart of the quaint, old-fashioned town, where the big wide streets are quite empty, and where a little river running through the by-streets keeps the place singularly rural, singularly fresh and sweet. The factory stands just above the little stream, and is a most picturesque place, with its old tarred sheds placed all round a species of courtyard, and its one tree with its wealth of foliage standing looking down at its deceased brethren, brought piecemeal here to begin a new and an honourable career, even if it be not as pleasant and peaceful a one as the first life in the silent beech-wood, where they had nothing whatever to do but to stand fast and grow as quickly as they possibly could. There is a sound of working from all parts of the yard, which is almost empty, though a solitary figure

In the Factory Yard.

passes through it every now and then carrying a finished chair, to be stacked away until it can be sent to its destination. This is generally London. Very often orders come from America and Australia, for, notwithstanding the cheap chairs turned out in their thousands by American machinery and in the Australian bent-wood factories, English chairs are still greatly in demand.

A cheering fact, this, for the men in their turning-sheds, and for the women caning hard by their cottage doors in the village; cheering, also, for the men in the factory, where they are busily at work fitting the different pieces of the chairs together, prior to polishing and staining the frames that under skilful manipulation become ebony, walnut, mahogany—anything you like, save honest, real beech. But the foreman says that Buckinghamshire mahogany and walnut are known by all the world to be really beech, and that calling the chairs after the stain is scarcely any deception at all.

The fitting-shop is, I think, the most interesting place in the whole factory. It is so amusing to see the workmen take the two pieces of wood, slightly bent to shape through the medium of steam, and begin to put the chair together, like one takes pieces of a puzzle. First the necessary holes are made, and the pieces put in which form the back. These are fastened first with glue, and then honestly on the face by a small cross-piece of wood that keeps all firm. Glue can come unstuck, says the foreman, but this bit of wood keeps everything in place, and guarantees that the wear of the chair shall be as good as it looks. Then the seat is formed, the front legs fastened on, and finally the rungs are put in, and the framework of the chair is complete.

A very strong smell of varnish greets us as we enter the polishing-shop. Here the chairs are rubbed well to take away any inequalities, and are given a coat of stain and varnish, although their first acquaintance with colour is made in the great copper that bubbles and steams, and fills the air in the yard with a curious pungent odour. The chairs become mahogany or walnut according to the decoction at that moment in the copper, and from here they go dripping and dark to the polishing-room, where they are allowed to dry, and finally receive the attention that renders them suitable for a lady's boudoir or bedroom. For in the factory they are now learning quite "high art," and produce charming malachite-green stained furniture with rush seats, that would do credit to any London shop or lady's chamber, where, indeed, these chairs appear often enough, though few of the dealers confess to their very humble origin in an English factory.

The Fitting-shop.

As we near the caning-room, falling up and down the narrow, old, half-broken stairs which lead between the different "shops," we pause for a few moments as the sound of singing strikes upon our ears. It is not ordinary singing, either; it falls and rises in regular cadences, while the different parts melt one into the other in the most cultured and delightful manner possible, and we are not surprised to hear from our conductor that the girls in the caning-room have quite a local celebrity for their part-singing, and that when they go out for their annual summer holiday, crowds gather at the station to hear them sing as they come in a body to the train and take their seats therein. "And they sing all the way there and all the way back, too," says the foreman, "though it's always a long day, and we start early and don't get back until some time in the next morning; but the girls are really happy here." And throwing open the door of the longest shed, he discloses the caning-room, which suddenly becomes quite silent, as the girls cease their singing and turn to look at us with slight curiosity, when, this once gratified, they resume their work again quickly and silently; for they are paid by piecework, and any lagging means so much less money to take on Saturday—a thing not to be contemplated if it can possibly be avoided.

All the girls wear big white pinafores, and many of them wear their hats. Some are twisting split canes in and out deftly, while one or two are working with rushes, which are brought in great heaps from the Thames eyots; but far more girls can cane than can work with the rushes, so that those who can fill in the rush-bottomed seats earn more money than the caners, and are generally better off in every way. There is always a man in the caning-room to split the canes and give out the rushes, but the girls take no notice of him, and generally chatter away in the most unconcerned manner, unless they are singing; but as long as we are present they are silence itself, and nothing will induce them to speak above a whisper, or answer our questions with anything save a timid "yes" or "no." But as we turn away and the door closes behind us, the chatter breaks out irrepressibly, and finally melts into song, snatches of which follow us down the stairs, and come drifting out of the window as we stand for a few moments in the yard, looking at the loading of a waggon which presently will groan and stagger out of the factory, and groan and creep along the road to London, bearing up to the great city the almost daily tribute paid by Buckinghamshire beeches, when hewn down and thus utilised, to its shrine.

J. E. PANTON.

At Work in the Caning-room.

THE KEY OF THE CASTLE.

"CAN'T you get in, Mr. Arkell? I saw Tilda and the baby go out this afternoon about three o'clock, but surely she's put the key under the scraper."

"No, Mrs. Parry, there's no key, and I've knocked and knocked till I'm tired. But, of course, if she's gone out, that isn't of any use. I shouldn't mind only——"

The young man stopped abruptly. He was a rather tall, good-looking young fellow of some seven or eight and twenty years; just now his face was full of vexation and perplexity, but in a general way its expression was pleasant enough, and he was quite a favourite, not only with the old neighbour to whom he spoke, but with most of his friends and acquaintances.

John Arkell was a prosperous man too, for his rank in life. With his own savings and the assistance of the local building society, he had put up the two neat little brick houses outside which he and the widow Parry were standing. For one he had an excellent tenant in Mrs. Parry; in the other he and his very small family lived with great comfort and advantage, and with great pride in their little property. Nothing could be neater than the clean white window curtains, the smooth grass plot, and trim flower border of both houses. They stood rather apart from others, on the outskirts of the town, where Arkell went to his daily work, and where his young wife was rather fond of spending an occasional afternoon in what she called "window-peeping."

"Only what?" asked Mrs. Parry, surprised to see her landlord so much put out as he seemed to be. John Arkell sighed and looked down; he twisted the stick he carried in his hand, and moved uneasily from one foot to the other. At last he said—

"You're an old friend, Mrs. Parry; perhaps I'd better tell you. The fact is, Tilda and I had some words at dinner-time. It isn't often we do, but you know I'm rather hot-tempered, and I was annoyed and spoke a good deal sharper than I meant to. And Tilda took fire in a minute; so, before we knew where we were, there was quite a desperate quarrel about nothing after all. I flung out of the house at last without saying good-bye, and now I've come home to find it all locked up, and the key gone too. I don't know what to think."

"Think!" cried Mrs. Parry, "I wouldn't think about it if I were you. Tilda might say a few hot words in a pet, but I'm sure she's not the woman to take any real offence; above all against a man she loves as well as she does you, John Arkell. You're home rather early; depend upon it, you'll see Tilda and baby coming along presently, and then you can make up your quarrel in no time if you are wise. I'm sorry I can't ask you in to wait till she comes, but I'm just going to my daughter's to stay till Friday evening, so of course I've fastened all up. Now, do be advised by an old woman like me: go and meet her, she's sure to be gone the town way, and you'll find her glad enough to kiss and make up."

With a hearty good-bye, neighbour Parry went on her way, and John stood for a minute or two hesitating at the little gate.

"It is too bad," he said to himself. "She might know I'm tired and want my tea. Any other time she'd have left the key at least, and everything ready, but I suppose she thinks to pay me out for what I said at dinner. I hope to goodness she hasn't got it into her foolish little head that I meant every word of it. She might know me better than that by this time. Anyhow, I must go and look for her."

And away went John towards the town. But he had not been gone more than a quarter of an hour when a young woman with a sleeping baby in a perambulator came slowly along in the opposite direction. Tilda Arkell looked rather tired, and her pretty face had a shadow of something more than weariness. "I suppose John has come home," she was thinking; "he'll find the key and get his own tea for once. It's a good while since I've left him to do it, but perhaps he'll have time to get the better of his temper, and I'm sure this long country walk has been a good thing for baby and me."

She stooped to brush the dust from her dress, and to press a fond kiss upon the rosy cheek of the lovely unconscious child, and then turned in at the little garden-gate. She tried the door; it was fastened, locked; then, just as John had done, she lifted the scraper, and saw to her dismay that the key she had placed there only a few hours before was nowhere to be found. "What can have become of it?" she asked herself, almost in terror. "It has always been safe there before. And there's Mrs. Parry not in and all! John must have come home and gone out again just to spite me. Only I shouldn't have thought he could ever, ever have been so cruel, and me so helpless and so tired with baby. And I shouldn't have thought he could ever have spoken as he did at dinner-time, either. If he'd do the one he'd do the other, I daresay." And poor overwrought Tilda leaned upon the iron railing and fairly sobbed in her distress.

But she was a sensible woman in many ways although she had a temper of her own, and she very soon dried her tears and considered what was to be done. "I'd better go and look for John," she thought. "For baby's sake I must get in; he's sure not to be far away."

So with weary feet and a heavy heart she went in the direction of the town and called on one or two friends of John's, looking anxiously about as she proceeded, hoping to see the familiar form coming towards her. But nothing was to be heard of her husband. "Mr. Arkell hasn't been here," said one man; "did you want him particularly?" "He's out and has the door-key with him. He didn't know I should be home before him," returned Tilda, too proud to explain all. But the farther she walked the heavier her heart became.

"It's getting late," she thought; "what will become of baby? He's sure to take cold."

Then a fresh idea came. "I'm close to the station now. I could just catch the Strensham train. I've a great mind to go to Bertha Fraser. They'd take the p'ram in the luggage van, and poor dear baby would get a night's rest there at any rate, and so should I."

Bertha Fraser was a friend of Tilda's who had married and settled at Strensham, only twelve miles away. The two friends paid each other pretty frequent visits, and Tilda felt sure that, come how she might, there would be a warm welcome for her and for baby.

No sooner thought than acted upon. In a few minutes John Arkell's wife sat, with the still sleeping infant in her lap, in the carriage that was fast conveying her away from her now really alarmed husband. For John, feeling sure

that Tilda had gone towards the town as she usually did, had been seeking her in every likely and unlikely place, with a growing dread that she had taken his hasty words seriously to heart, perhaps had even gone off in a passionate moment and left him desolate. After hours of fruitless search he stood at last before his own front door again. All was dark and deserted, and Arkell was beginning to feel at his wits' end.

Just then a step sounded on the gravel path, and a big boy he knew by sight came running hastily up. "Please, Mr. Arkell, is this your key?" he said, holding up the lost treasure.

"Where on earth did you get it?" demanded the astonished John.

"'Twas in our little Tommy's pocket," the boy went on, as soon as he could get his breath. "Mother was a-turning of his pocket out long after he was gone to bed, and among the bits of stick and stones she found this key. She went and woke him up and wanted to know about it, but he was that stupid and sleepy she could only make out that another boy give it him as said he'd been playing in a garden and found it under the scraper. Mother thought p'r'aps from what the little 'un said about the garden it might be yours. I've been here twice before, but I couldn't find you."

John fumbled in his purse and found something to give the boy for his trouble; then he opened the door and went in to his darkened abode. He struck a light and sat down in the still orderly kitchen. It was all spotless, and clean, and neat, but a pang shot through the poor man's heart as he thought, what would it be without Tilda? And then all at once it came to him that very likely Tilda had misjudged him as he had misjudged her; that, not finding the key, she must have supposed he had taken it, and perhaps gone off in her anger.

"She would go to Bertha Fraser's," he said to himself, "there is nowhere else where she could go. But how am I to get there to-night?"

The last train to Strensham had been gone two hours and more; yet he could not wait till morning. There was nothing for it but to walk the twelve miles. Too anxious and unhappy to think of eating or drinking, John re-locked the door and set off on his dreary journey. But it was very late; his stay in the empty house had been longer than he thought, and he was weary at the start with a hard day's work and his fruitless quest since, so that he was really unable to walk very rapidly. In spite of his best efforts the summer morning had fairly dawned when he got to the first straggling houses of the little town of Strensham. He sat down on a fallen tree by the wayside and thought over the situation.

"It will never do to go and knock them up and frighten them all. I daresay I look white enough by this time. I'll go and get some breakfast as soon as folks are about, and then go on to Fraser's."

So John rested and waited with what patience he could muster, till the early people at the coffee-house were stirring, and after a cup of tea and a new-laid egg or two he felt considerably better and more hopeful. But the night's anxiety and effort had told upon him for all that, and it was a very haggard face that met Bertha Fraser's gaze when that cheerful young matron opened the door to his knock.

"Well, Mr. Arkell, so you've come to look for the runaway," she said, in a voice full of laughter.

"Is she here, Mrs. Fraser?" asked poor John, vainly trying to control his anxiety and suspense.

"Here! of course she is here! and in bed and asleep too, and that beauty of a baby. She's been in a dreadful state about you, but I told her we should have you here by the morning, or else my name wasn't Bertha Fraser. But come right in and tell me how it all happened."

While John was explaining himself as best he could, Tilda came downstairs.

"Oh, John! oh, John!" cried the foolish little woman, and she just threw herself into his arms and burst into tears. But the tears were soon dried when John told his story, which he did not do without a good many interruptions from the amused Bertha and her husband.

"How could you ever act so?" cried the merry young hostess. "Why, I wouldn't think such a thing of Alec, whatever he'd said or done. And as to Alec thinking that I'd ever leave him for an angry word, he knows me better than that, don't you, dear old man?"

"Aye, that I do, my lass," returned Alec, a big, red-haired Scotchman, with a kind heart of his own, "but folks are not all made alike, you ken."

"Well, you've been a couple of fools, that's all I can say," went on Mrs. Bertha, nothing daunted.

"But, please God, we'll never be such fools again," said John Arkell, gravely, as he pressed Tilda's little hand in his own. "And now, Mrs. Fraser, with many thanks for your kindness to Tilda, I think we'll be going."

Now, there are two morals for young married people in this little story; they are both so obvious, so entirely on the surface, that it is hardly necessary to point them out, but since there are some people who like everything made as plain as possible, perhaps it will be just as well to say that the first is, always to be careful about the front-door key; the second, and the far more important, is this: when you have, or fancy you have, any cause for suspicion, do not be too ready to think the worst of each other.

HURRY.

Some people are always in a hurry, yet always behindhand. The two things generally go together. The methodical woman, on the contrary, is never in a hurry. She fulfils her every duty as Goethe says the stars move—"without haste and without rest." She knows what should be done first, what next, and how long each item to be attended to will require. She sees in an exigency what can be omitted or deferred, and what must be done according to the programme she has made. If she wishes to take a certain train, she is there in time, with five or six minutes to spare. If a certain task is to be done by a certain date, the work is ready a little in advance of the date. All this comes of a habit of forecasting, planning, and working daily according to a settled programme. If the person who is always in a hurry were to sit down quietly and make out a list of what she has to do, what must be done and what may be omitted, and of the time each task will probably take, and then simply keep to her list, she would find no need to be in a hurry. Some housekeepers are always in a hurry about breakfast or dinner, or getting to church, or having their sewing done, or making calls, or something else; and they do not realise that hurry is the result of a state of mind within, and is not necessarily caused by circumstances outside of them.

THE SICK CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

BY THE EDITOR.

HARD indeed must be the heart that is not moved at the sight of a little child in pain. Indifference in the presence of childish suffering, or even at the mere mention of it, is impossible to any who are endowed with the ordinary feelings of humanity; and to mothers above all people the subject must appeal with irresistible force. I feel sure, therefore, that I shall have the sympathy of every mother who reads these lines while I try to tell something of the beneficent work that is being done in one of London's hospitals for children.

Shadwell is the name of the locality in which the hospital is to be found. It is not by any means a salubrious neighbourhood. The narrow, tortuous streets, the poor, rickety-looking houses, the signs of desperate poverty that confront one at almost every turn, combine to produce an unwonted feeling of depression; and it is a positive relief to see presently the big, comfortable-looking building that stands as an oasis in the desert, bearing over its portico the legend THE EAST LONDON HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN—a veritable house of healing to many forlorn little ones of the district.

I wish you, whoever you are, who read these lines,

"Watching by the cot."

could go, as I have gone, to see, as I have seen this place. A single half-hour spent within its walls would carry more conviction of the sore need for it, and the incalculable good of it, than all the words that ever were written. The hospital contains 102 beds, and perhaps it is hardly necessary to say that these are all occupied. Were there ten times as many cots, little sufferers could be found to fill them. "Almost daily," says the resident medical officer, "patients urgently requiring admission have to be sent home." Can you quite realise, good reader, what that means? Remember first, that the patients are *little children*, then reflect on the pain, the weary, racking pain, lurking behind those direful words "urgently requiring admission;" and, lastly, bear in mind that the homes from which these little ones are brought, and to which, alas! too frequently, for lack of an available cot, they have to be sent back again, are more often than not single, squalid rooms, miserably furnished, and without one solitary comfort or appliance—aye, perhaps without even absolute necessaries—for the helpless little sufferers doomed to lie there and cry the long, long hours away till the wee mites grow slowly better, or, perchance, till death puts a merciful end to their pain.

Of the hospital itself one can only say that it is most admirably adapted for the work that has to be done. The building, in its present form, dates from 1877, when it was opened by Her Royal Highness the Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck. It contains three wards—one each for girls, boys, and babies—named respectively, The Princess Mary Ward, The Enfield Ward, and The Heckford Ward. That these wards contain as much as they can hold of childish suffering is, of course, inevitable; but they contain far, far more than this. In each of them bright-faced, cheery nurses are flitting about, ministering tenderly and deftly to the needs of the little ones lying in their tiny cots, ranged along each side of the large rooms. Down the middle of the wards are tables, one of which, on the occasion of my visit, was covered with sweet spring flowers, that filled the air with their fragrance. Beautiful pictures, in some cases the gifts of schools of happier children, adorn the walls; and these same walls, in the girls' ward at least, are prettily decorated with a dado of olive green and a frieze of daffodils.

But all the brightness, all the fragrance, all the beauty, cannot for a moment banish from my mind the one thought that within these walls I am in the presence of one of the saddest of all sad things—suffering childhood. On entering one of the wards, the first cot that I see is vacant, but clean sheeted, and in readiness for a new patient, who is to occupy it immediately. In the cot next to this little empty nest is a wee mite, very white and thin, but convalescent. She is fast asleep, for it is afternoon, and many of the babies are having a nap. Not all, however, as I very soon find; for, on approaching a certain cot a little way along the ward, I hear a piping voice calling the matron by name, "Miss Davies, Miss Davies!" The kindly lady who presides over this large family hurries at once to the cot-side. I follow close in her wake, and am surprised to find in the owner of the piping voice a rosy-cheeked, sunny-faced little fellow, in striking contrast to the other wan, pale faces I have seen. At the first glance he hardly looks as though in need of hospital treatment; but when I learn that in consequence of a tumour on the brain the bright brown eyes are quite sightless, the right arm paralysed, and all the faculties and senses dulled, my opinion changes entirely. Poor little lad!

A curtained cot, into which a bronchitis kettle is steaming, tells its own tale. I stand a moment watching the laboured breathing of the tiny girl-baby—she is only a few months old—within the cot. A heavy sigh causes me to turn quickly, and I find Miss Davies looking sadly into the little face. It needs no practised eye to see that the baby is desperately ill. "Is there any hope?" I ask. My companion only sighs again for answer, and draws me away to another part of the room, where a few cots are reserved for surgical cases. One bright-eyed little lassie is sitting up, and smiles faintly at me as I pause before her bed. "What

"Sweet spring flowers."

is the matter here?" I inquire, and I am told "the arm is diseased." This little patient is only seven months old, and she is now in the hospital for the fifth time. The mother of the child, it seems, is little more than a girl herself; and, either through ignorance or carelessness, undoes in a week what it takes the doctors a fortnight to accomplish. I remark that this must be somewhat discouraging, but my words fall unheeded, for the matron and the baby are having a quiet romp—in a *very* mild way, of course! In each of the next two cots is a little child lying face downwards. I cannot help noticing the unusual position, and inquire the reason for it. I am hardly prepared for the answer—"Their eyes are diseased, and they are easier lying that way." Very sadly the words are spoken, and the matron's hand goes out over each cot, and tenderly touches each little head ere we pass on.

And so we go round the ward, and come again at last to our starting-point. The little cot that was empty when I entered the room is occupied now. The occupant is a tiny babe—one of the fairest visions of beautiful babyhood I have ever seen; and standing by the cot-side is the baby's mother. She has stayed to see her little one put safely in its clean white bed, and now she must leave her, and go away back to the home that will seem so sadly empty without that baby presence. The tears fall fast as the mother inquires how soon and how often she may come to see her little one, but the answer she receives seems to reassure her, for after a while she looks more hopeful, and with a few words of sympathy and comfort from the matron, at length she turns away. She is evidently very poor, but strong affection is no rare thing amongst poor people; and if this sorrowing, loving mother is like many another whose child this hospital has sheltered, she will come, should the little one grow worse, and, after her hard day's toil, will spend the night hours watching by the cot, and praying for the little life that is dearer to her than her own.

Oh, poor, loving mothers! Their lives are indeed hard and cheerless, but these hospital walls witness daily that they love their babies as passionately and devotedly as any high-born lady loves her favoured children. One of the greatest difficulties with which the hospital authorities have to contend lies in the sad fact that in very many cases the little patients are brought to them too late for medical skill to avail anything. Would you know why this is? It is because the mothers cling to them so; because to give them up—even into the gentle, kindly hands of healing—causes such a bitter pang to the mother-heart! And yet, when once the prospect of parting for a time with their tiny treasures has been bravely faced, once they have seen their little ones cosily settled between the snowy sheets, the gratitude of these poor mothers knows no bounds. They will kiss the wee white faces, and go away quite content to leave their babies in such capable keeping, and perfectly sure—as indeed they well may be—that everything which human ingenuity and love can devise will be done to relieve and cure.

And for the poor sick bairns themselves what a blessed change it is from the comfortless, overcrowded places in

Leaving the Hospital—Convalescent.

which they live, to the cosy cot in the bright, comfortable ward of the hospital; from a hard, coarse fare of the commonest food—and none too much even of that—to a well-chosen and carefully prepared diet; from general discomfort and aggravated pain to all that medical skill, assiduous nursing, and tenderest sympathy can suggest for their relief.

Oh, how thankful, how devoutly thankful, *every* mother should be that for the sick children of the poor there is such a house of healing as this! The heart of every true mother must surely be stirred when she hears of the good work that is being done in the Children's Hospital at Shadwell. May I not hope, then, that some at least of the mothers who read these words will be moved to show in a practical way their sympathy for the sick children of other mothers poorer than themselves? I have received no commission to plead for funds on behalf of the hospital—not the faintest hint of anything of the kind was suggested to me; but I cannot forbear to tell my readers that the institution is entirely unendowed, that it is situated in a very poor neighbourhood, and that money for carrying on the work is urgently needed. In addition to the effort of making both ends meet, the committee are striving to obtain sufficient funds to enable them to establish a convalescent home for their little patients—a very necessary adjunct, for lack of which their work is often sadly crippled. Who will help them? For the children's sake—aye, for the sake of the Lord of the little ones, who tells us that "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," I ask, who will help them? Any subscriptions that are sent to me at the office of this magazine, 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., I will gladly forward to the hospital; or they will be gratefully received by the Secretary, at the address of the institution, Glamis Road, Shadwell, London, E.

PRECOCITY, NATURAL OR ABNORMAL?

"THE charm of childhood is its child-likeness," says a certain writer. The phrase sounds like a commonplace, yet to-day, when children grow into little men and women so fast and discard juvenility years before their parents thought of doing so, the words are not without significance. Lavater tells us that the men and women of the future are made at their mothers' knees, and in respect to the question of premature development, this assertion is especially true. Maternal laxity and maternal pride have always done much to foster precocity and its complement, pertness. It is so natural to delight in our child's ability to grasp something beyond the mental ken of other children, and to desire that others should notice and admire his superior talent or intelligence.

Precocity comes from two causes, abnormal development or dawning genius. We are told that Grotius wrote Latin poetry at eight years of age, and Hobbes a Latin tragedy at eleven, whilst Lord Macaulay from earliest years "talked like print"—when four years old, he is said to have replied to a lady who condoled with him upon having some hot coffee spilt over his legs, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." These and like statements, however, refer to remarkable men, and are exceptions which prove the rule, that precocious children usually make mediocre men and women.

Nature's great law is that a child shall first observe, then learn the use of its limbs and muscles, and afterwards develop memory and reasoning faculties. These processes do not necessarily take place at the same age in every child; even the time at which we may expect to see the various stages of physical growth can only be approximately given, and what is abnormal in one child may be quite normal in another. Heredity, circumstance, and surroundings do much to vary the time at which children begin to observe, understand, and converse.

Precocity need not alarm the parent if the body is at the same time healthily developed. Too often the infant phenomenon is presented to us puny, white, and unchild-like in feature and expression, and we see at once that mind and brain have been nourished at the expense of flesh and muscle. No thoughtful observer enjoys the spectacle of a child "showing off," as it is commonly called. We know such a process must tend to make him vain, affected, and unnatural. Should we adults be natural under the same circumstances—brought into public notice, discussed like a bit of statuary, one or more of our "bright sayings" repeated and applauded, and then commanded to recite a little poem, or answer some subtly-constructed conundrum, or solve a simple arithmetical problem? Any kind of forcing process is as injurious to the strength and quality of the mind as it is to the products of the vegetable world. We get the fruit earlier, but it lacks the vigour and beauty of spontaneous growth. Even in the primary matter of teaching young children words and phrases, the wise mother will let Nature take her own time, confining herself to the correction of those mispronunciations which arise from carelessness rather than inability to shape the words. The difficult task of "letting children alone" is very beneficial to them; grown people bore children quite as often as children bore grown people.

Lord Palmerston once said that all children were born good; their "fallings away from grace" were due to circumstance and bad management. Whether this be so or not, there are some who seem precocious and pert from the cradle. Everybody knows such children, and finds it difficult to like them. All sorts of most personal questions they will propound to you, whilst upon your discussion with the parents of the latest book, or some matter of foreign policy, little six-year-old will proffer her remarks or criticism. In the most of such cases the mother is indulgent, without self-assertion, and accustomed to aggression in her children, and you will find yourself silenced or the attention paid to your remarks merely perfunctory. Though far from advocating the old-fashioned system of repression, children should early be taught that there is a time for everything, a time for them to air their views and opinions, and a time when, in the old nursery phrase, "they should be seen and not heard." In these days of advocacy of children's rights, we must be careful that the rights of adults do not get ignored altogether.

It is a mistake to think that precocity, like the colour of the eyes, or the texture of the hair, is a quality of Nature's endowing, to be borne with what patience and fortitude we may possess. Wise management may destroy or keep within bounds both precocity and pertness. Perfecting the health and strengthening the muscles will do much, for precocity is only to be feared when it accompanies a delicate constitution, flabby muscles, and a distaste for open-air exercise and active pursuits.

We need to show great patience towards these little would-be men and women, when we remember how much they lose. The less childlike a child is, the less does he possess of that enjoyment and gaiety peculiar to early years. Precocious children are so apt to think it clever to despise childish myths and poetic fancies, and follow in the footsteps of the little boy in *Punch*, who lost all interest in a favourite story-book when he found a grammatical blunder in the text. Such a child, left to follow his own bent, may become a great man, but he will never be an artist or a poet. Like Wordsworth's Peter Bell, to whom

> "A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And it is nothing more."

To him the beauties of the world will not reveal half their beauty; he "will never get beyond the humbler realities of the Horngate, nor pass through the shining portals of ivory into the land of poetry."

Such superciliousness and the earliest symptom of pertness must be nipped in the bud, and the first flippant answer severely rebuked, if we would destroy abnormal precocity. We must, however, be careful to distinguish between pertness and brightness. The terms are by no means synonymous, yet it is sometimes difficult to tell at what point they diverge. An involuntary expression of surprise at an incongruity, or amusement at some open disparity, does not necessarily constitute pertness. These problems of child management are by no means simple of solution. To quote the words of Herbert Spencer, we are brought face to face with the fact that "to educate highly is not a simple or an easy thing, but a complex and extremely difficult thing—the hardest task which devolves on adult life." Yet as a bright encouragement we know "it is remunerative beyond the severest cost," and the influence of our working will be far from transitory.

ISABEL SUART ROBSON.

STARCHING AND IRONING.

IN making and using starch, all the utensils and water should be perfectly clean. Mix the dry starch with enough cold water to make a thin paste. Pour on this the required amount of boiling water, stirring all the while. To each quart of starch add a teaspoonful each of salt and lard. Boil the starch until it looks clear, which will be in about ten minutes, and then strain it through a piece of cheese-cloth (it will have to be squeezed through the cloth). White articles should be dipped into the hot starch, but have it cooled a little for coloured ones. For collars, cuffs, shirts, etc., use the starch very thick; for white skirts it should be rather thin; for dresses, aprons, and children's clothing it must also be thin, and for table linen only the thinnest kind should be used. Always have starched clothing thoroughly dried; then sprinkle evenly with enough cold water to make the articles very damp. Fold smoothly and roll up in a clean cloth for several hours.

In ironing, begin with the plain pieces, like sheets and pillow-cases. This will get the irons in condition for the starched clothes, which should be done next; and after these, finish the plain pieces. Get the ironing blanket and sheet spread smoothly on the table and tacked in place, and have some fine salt spread on a board. Tie a large piece of beeswax in a cloth, and after rubbing the hot iron on salt, rub the beeswax over it. Finally, wipe the iron on a clean cloth. This process will make the iron clean and smooth. Starched clothes must be made very damp, and be ironed until perfectly dry; other articles should be dampened only slightly. In ironing, do the rubbing, when possible, the length of the cloth—that is, with the selvedge.

HINTS FOR HOT WEATHER.

IT is desirable to avoid drinking largely of cold fluids when heated or fatigued. For children, all milk, so long as the temperature is high, should be boiled as soon as it is taken into the house. One drop of sour milk given to an infant may cause serious illness. Feeding-bottles and their fittings therefore require special attention. It is advisable to have at least two such bottles in use, and directly after feeding they should be rinsed out first in cold, and then in hot water, to which has been added a little bicarbonate of soda. The bottles, tubes, teats, and corks, being thoroughly well brushed and cleansed, should then be left lying in a basin of water in which a little soda has been dissolved. Before using, hold every article under the tap, so as to wash out all the soda.

To free milk from germs, it requires to be boiled for twenty minutes in a large and very clean saucepan, so that it cannot boil over or burn, and the skin which gathers should be mixed up with the milk by a spoon. After boiling, pour it into a clean jug covered tightly with strong brown paper, and put it either in a clean, cool safe out of doors, or on the window-sill where the sun will not shine upon it. The addition of a little barley-water or lime-water favours digestion when given. In hot weather, test the milk always with blue litmus-paper, to be purchased of the chemist; and if the blue is reddened, either make a fresh quantity, or add a small pinch of baking soda to the food. Milk or food that reddens blue litmus-paper is not fit for children.

Summer complaint in children does not come from teething, but from over or improper feeding, and hot and foul air. Starchy farinaceous diet, such as arrowroot, sago, and patent foods, often produces diarrhœa in children, and should never be given to babies until they are six or seven months old, or until some teeth are being cut.

When babies in hot weather vomit and purge actively, give no milk, nor anything to eat or drink for four or six hours, but all the fresh air you can. Nor should laudanum or other opiates be given, except under medical advice. Never neglect diarrhœa in children. As a preventive, rapidly sponge or wash the child with cold water at least twice a day, and oftener in very hot weather. In hot weather give babies no sugar at all. If the milk cannot be kept or be got fresh enough, use condensed milk without sugar. Remember that over-feeding does more harm than anything else.

Notify the Nuisance Inspector of all bad drains and smells, and of all foul ashpits and premises. Burn all vegetable and animal refuse immediately, and use disinfectants freely. Keep green refuse, offal, and slops out of the ashpits.

A MOTHER'S NOTES ON DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

DRESSES of thin material are what most of our readers will be making this month. Muslins are much in favour; these, of course, are not gored, but made up with plain widths very full. The present gored skirt needs a firmer material than the sateens and zephyrs so long used for this purpose. Hence this need has given rise to the introduction of jean, drill, holland, and tussore for ladies' dresses. One very stylish-looking dress we saw in Regent Street was of jean, the colour of unbleached holland. The skirt was bell-shaped and quite plain; over this was a three-quarter length jacket, half fitting, and turned back with large revers. A bright-coloured blouse-bodice, or lady's shirt, was worn under the jacket. Of course, a cape could be made in place of the jacket.

Fig. 31.

Double skirts, and skirts having a flounce from the knees about eighteen inches wide, are much worn; indeed, the trimmings are gradually getting within a few inches of the waist. Blouse-bodices still hold sway, and are really a very convenient fashion, being both easy to make and comfortable to wear. Most elegant materials are sometimes employed. One very handsome pattern was made of variegated silk, and had the inevitable shoulder frills.

For girls of all ages the loose-fitting blouse is mostly used, especially when cotton materials are employed. Many of these fit into a square yoke, and over this have one or two frills gathered, with two or three runners (one of which is sometimes of embroidery) at the neck.

Fig. 31 shows a lady's dress made in a woollen crêpon. The bell skirt is trimmed with pleatings graduated in width. With this skirt there is a full body, trimmed with frills, which go from back to front, being wider on the shoulders. These frills are edged with a narrow gimp trimming, as is also the edge of the sleeve frill, below the puff. The cape shown with this dress is one of the fashionable circular capes, so very useful at this time of the year. They are very often made of the same material as the dress, with a shoulder frill of the same, or of silk or satin. Black satin capes of this shape are much worn, and they are trimmed all round with rows of rolled satin or bead trimming. Lace is very little used on mantles and capes this year.

Fig. 32.

Fig. 32 represents a blouse-bodice which is made in figured delaine, trimmed with lace insertion. The style is very pretty for young persons, and one, we feel sure, that will become a favourite. In making this bodice the first thing to be done is to get a good fitting lining; this is made to fasten down the centre, and has a V-shaped plain piece of the material at the neck. Over this lining the material is gathered full on the shoulders, and fastened over a little on one side. The fulness is gathered and set into a band at the waist. The sleeve has a puff at the top, which is set on with a heading about an inch wide. A narrow band finishes the waist.

Fig. 33 is a dress for a little girl from five to ten years of age. The pattern is suitable for either cotton or woollen material. The skirt can be tucked, or trimmed with rows of narrow braid or velvet. It is gathered and set on with a tiny heading. The body has a round yoke with a frill, and below this is laid on half-inch pleats. A full puff is used for the sleeve, with a deep tight-fitting cuff below. The dress will take from three to four yards of double-width stuff, and from four to six of washing material of the ordinary width.

Fig. 33.

Fig. 34. Here we show a child's overall pinafore, or the pattern could be used for a cotton dress. Unfortunately, the little ones are compelled to wear very long frocks just now, and so the pinafore has to be long to cover them entirely over. But extremes of long or short dresses are not desirable for girls, so our readers must find the happy medium. Two widths of cotton stuff will be sufficient for a pinafore, but for a dress two and a half to three will be necessary. These are joined up, hemmed, and set into a round yoke, which is edged with two frills of embroidery or lace. The sleeve is gathered into the armhole, and also just above the frill of embroidery at the waist. Pinafores of this shape can be made to button all the way down the back, and this is a very convenient way to have them made, as they dry quicker and iron much more easily when they can be laid out flat.

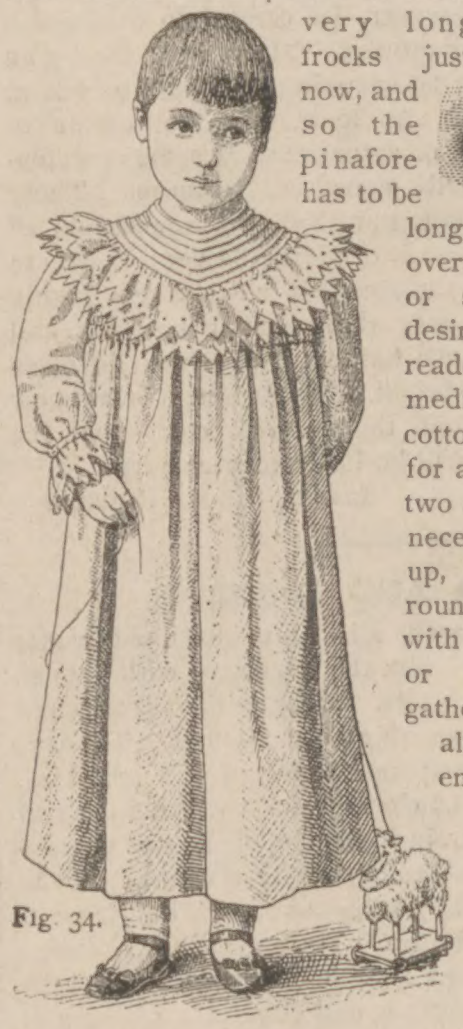

Fig. 34.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Fig. 31, dress 6½d., cape 6½d., together 10½d.; figs. 32 and 33, 6½d. each; fig. 34, 4½d. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.